

Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr. today praised Governor Blagojevich for supporting construction of the Abraham Lincoln National Airport through an innovative public-private partnership that is cost-free and risk-free to the public.

"Hope is on the way," Jackson said. "With an improved O'Hare, modern Midway and brand new south suburban airport, Illinois will remain the world's pre-eminent aviation hub."

"It's been a long and laborious road, but I applaud the Governor for his commitment and cooperation to make the Abraham Lincoln National Airport a world-class facility. The Governor was clear and direct. He supports the public-private partnership and wants to see planes flying and people working in the Southland as soon as possible," Jackson said.

"Illinois can ill afford to sit back and watch as jobs, tourists, and aviation capacity leave Chicago for Denver, Dallas or Atlanta. The aviation market is changing rapidly and Illinois must adapt quickly and cost-effectively or lose market share. The Lincoln Airport will keep Illinois strong."

"Lincoln Airport will be the first airport in the United State designed, built and priced to specifically attract low-cost carriers and cargo jets. The Governor understands how important aviation is to the economy. His decision to go-ahead is courageous and visionary."

Jackson noted that the Illinois Department of Transportation recently informed him that the State plans to select "the Lincoln plan" as the State's "preferred alternative ' for the airport and will submit it to the FAA for approval within a few weeks. FAA approval could come by year's end.

"The project comes when and where it is most needed," the Congressman added. "The metro area needs airport capacity, and the fast-growing regions of Will County and the Chicago Southland need an economic anchor. This airport achieves both."

"Our proposal represents 1,000 construction jobs by 2007 and 15,000 new permanent jobs for

Illinoisans by 2009, at no cost or risk to the taxpayers. It's one of the biggest jobs programs ever in the State," Jackson said.

As proposed, the inaugural airport will feature one-runway and a five-gate terminal in 4,200 acres of land between University Park and Peotone in Eastern Will County.

"This airport will combine the best of both worlds -- private investment and ingenuity with public oversight and governance," Jackson said.

"Public-private partnerships reflect the new paradigm for airport development around the world. The state's own studies conclude that this is the wave of the future and that our developers -- LCOR and SNC Lavalin -- are among the very best in the world."

LCOR and SNC-Lavalin will build, finance and operate the Lincoln Airport with private equity and revenue bonds. They currently own and/or operate airports in New York, Paris, Vancouver, Malta, Nova Scotia, and elsewhere. SNC also is building new airports in New Orleans and Moscow.

Regarding governance, airport operations will be overseen by the Abraham Lincoln National Airport Commission. ALNAC currently is comprised of 32 communities but remains open for other Will and South Cook county communities to join.

Jackson today urged the State to continue its efforts to purchase the 4,200 acres required for the inaugural development. To date, the State has purchased about 2,000 acres. The General Assembly has appropriated enough money to purchase the balance of the land.

Al McCowan, who is Mayor of University Park and the Chairman of ALNAC, noted that the Lincoln Airport will begin to bring economic equity and balance to the metro area.

"President Lincoln brought together the North and the South to build a stronger union. Lincoln

Airport will bring together the North Side and the South Side to build a stronger regional economy," McCowan said.